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PUNS AND PLAYS ON PROPER NAMES

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In 1897 there appeared in the *Harvard Studies* (VIII, 103-84) an article by Professor Chase called "The Origin of Roman Praenomina." Since that time the literature on the subject of names has been augmented by several additions which run the gamut from the popular article to the scholarly tome.¹ Each writer has approached the subject from a different avenue, but there are still some paths untrodden. It is the aim of the present paper to investigate one of these bypaths, "Puns and Plays on Proper Names." It is hoped that the paper will not prove to be merely a compilation of witticisms but will throw some light on Roman mental processes and show at what Romans laughed.

The ancestors of the Romans, on abandoning the Indo-European system of compound names, adopted prosaic substitutes. These were suggested by personal appearance, traits, defects, occupations, etc.,² and hence were in origin more or less of the character of nicknames. Even the royal family could not escape this national tendency, for example, Caligula, Severus, Pius, Pertinax. It is not strange that a nation which poked fun at personal deformities³ should feel no delicacy about punning on names with obvious connotations. "Etiam interpretatio nominis habet acumen, cum ad ridiculum convertas, quam ob rem ita quis vocetur" (Cic. *De orat.* ii. 63. 257).

Dr. Johnson went so far as to say that a man who will make a pun will pick a pocket. Among Roman writers we find names given

¹ Schulze, *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen*; Colbourn, "What's in a Name?" *Class. Weekly*, VI, 66-69; Dean, *A Study of the Cognomina of Soldiers in the Roman Legions*; R. B. Steele, "Roman Personal Names," *Class. Weekly*, XI, 113-18.

² See Chase, *op. cit.*

³ "Est etiam deformitatis et corporis vitiorum satis bella materies ad iocandum" (Cic. *De orat.* ii. 59. 239). That Cicero was not merely theorizing is shown by his coarse personal abuse of Vatinius and Piso.

to certain characters with the obvious intention of punning upon them.¹ *Redende Namen* are common too. Like wine, the play upon the name Rex apparently grew better as it seasoned. We find it on the lips of Cicero (*Att.* i. 16. 10), Caesar (*Suet.* 79. 2), and Horace (*Sat.* 1. 7). Cicero made at least fifteen assaults upon the name Verres. (Perhaps his failure to deliver all the Verrine speeches saved him from an outraged public.) The same quest after a play is manifest on sepulchral inscriptions, where it is clearly regarded as an embellishment. It required great restraint for the bereaved to mention the *Parcae* on an epitaph without stating that they did not spare. The writer has found over twenty inscriptions punning on the names Felix, Felicula, Felicitas.

This constant reiteration reminds one of the Italian cicerone. When he unloads a joke for the thousandth and first time, yet with all the spontaneity of an initial attempt, one is inclined to think that this ability is inherited, and that the sins of the fathers have been visited upon the children beyond the third and fourth generation.

The pun most familiar to high-school students, but never appreciated, with or without explanation, is the one on *ad equum rescribere* by a certain soldier of Caesar's Tenth Legion (*B.G.* i. 42). Next in order must come the double-barreled *ius Verrinum* (*Verr.* i. 46. 121), the cleverest of Cicero's many attempts to play on the name Verres. For convenience, the writer has made several classifications of word plays, beginning with equivoques.

EQUIVOQUES

Where a word, like the tongue of a jackdaw, speaks twice as much by being split.—Pope.

Puns of this type are the most concise, since a word is used with a *double entendre*, or is repeated with a different signification. At Rome absence was not conducive to successful electioneering: "Admonuisti etiam, quod in Creta [i.e., toga cretata] fuisses, dictum aliquod in petitionem tuam dici potuisse" (*Cic. Planc.* 34. 85). Making the last first was not confined to biblical parables:

¹ This is very true of Plautus, e.g., *Peniculus* (*Men.* 77); *Scortum* (*Capt.* 69 ff.); *Sceledrus* (*Mil.* 289, 330, 494); *Tranio* (*Most.* 5, 825, 903, 984; see Fay, *Most.*, p. 64); *Truculentus* (*Truc.* 265, 266, 674); *Gelasimus* (*Stich.* 174).

"Respondebo igitur Postumo primum" (Cic. *Mur.* 25. 57). Pompey's greatness was twofold: "Nostra miseria tu es Magnus" (Cic. *Att.* ii. 19. 3; cf. Val. Max. vi. 2. 9). Not even the tombstone is sacred to the punster: "Solvit vota sua laetus cum coniuge Cara" (*Anthol.* 317); "Agnosces nomen coniugis Gratae meae" (Chol., 142).¹

Two puns in one sentence are not a unique occurrence: "In his inventae sunt quinque imagunculae matronarum in quibus una sororis amici tui hominis *bruti* qui hoc utatur et illius *lepidi* qui haec tam neglegenter ferat" (Cic. *Att.* vi. 1. 25; cf. *Att.* xiv. 14. 2).² After citing an illustration of the extraordinary frugality of Lucius Piso during his praetorship in Spain, Cicero remarks (*Verr.* iv. 25. 57): "Ridiculum est me nunc de Verre [i.e., the hog] dicere, quum de Pisone Frugi [i.e., the frugal] dixerim."

The use of the pun as a means of economy of effort was an idea worthy of the fertile brain of the rake Trimalchio, who gave the name Carpus to his carver: "Ita quotiescumque dixit 'Carpe,' eodem verbo vocat et imperat" (Petr. 36 *ad fin.*).³ "Suavis autem

¹ Abbreviations used in giving references: *Anthol.*=Buecheler, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*; Chol.=Cholodniak, *Carmina Sepulcralia Latina*; Eng.=Engstroem, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*.

² Cf. *Hamlet* (Act III, scene 2, lines 97-99).

"*Polonius*: I did enact Julius Caesar: I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

"*Hamlet*: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there."

³ There are many equivoques in Latin: Aquila (Cic. *Phil.* xii. 8. 20); Asellus (Cic. *De orat.* ii. 64. 258); Balbus (Cic. *Fam.* ix. 19. 1-2); Boius est, boiam terit (Plaut. *Capt.* 888); Bona, i.e., Bona Dea (Cic. *Har. resp.* 37); Caecilianam fabulam, play on name of poet and gens (Cic. *Att.* i. 16. 15); Candida (*CIL*, iv, 1520); Corintharius (Suet. *Aug.* 70. 2); Felix (Chol., 174); Germanus (Cic. *Phil.* xi. 6. 14); germani (Vell. Pat. ii. 67. 4); gallus (Cic. *Pis.* 67); Galli (Suet. *Nero* 45. 2); ius Hirtianum (Cic. *Fam.* ix. 18); Kópa, playing on Cora (Plaut. *Capt.* 881); Laudiceni (Plin. *Ep.* ii. 14. 5); Libertas (Cic. *Dom.* 42. 110); Liber (Plaut. *Capt.* 557-58; *Cist.* 127-28; Petr. 41); Ligurino, play on P. Aelius Ligur and Ligurian (Cic. *Att.* v. 20. 6); Nigra (*CIL*, iv, 6892; see Eng., p. 92); Phoenicium, poenicio corio (Plaut. *Pseud.* 229); Pistorenses (Plaut. *Capt.* 160); Prima (Chol., 130, 214); pulcher (Catull. 79); quadrantaria permutatione (Cic. *Cael.* 26. 62; Quadrantaria was a nickname, as we know from Plut. *Cic.* 29); Restituta (Chol., 1201a); Servius Tullius (Quint. ix. 3. 21); Rex (Cic. *Att.* i. 16. 10; Hor. *Sat.* i. 7; Suet. *Jul. Caes.* 79. 2); Tirones (Cic. *Phil.* xii. 6. 14); truculentus (Plaut. *Truc.* 265, 266, 674); Umbra (Plaut. *Most.* 769-70); ius Verrinum (Cic. *Verr.* i. 46. 121); Veneri et Cupidini (Cic. *Verr.* iv. 55. 123); Vindex (Suet. *Nero* 45. 2).

est et vehementer saepe utilis iocus et facetiae" (Cic. *De orat.* ii. 54. 216).

The art of punning was included in the equipment of the wily Ulysses. Perhaps the most famous pun in Greek literature is that on οὔτις and οὐ τις, by means of which Ulysses managed to effect his escape from Cyclops (*Odys.* ix. 366-414).¹ A name capable of being punned upon was at times a great misfortune: Κόνων Θρασύβουλον θρασύβουλον ἐκάλει, καὶ Ἡρόδικος Θρασύμαχον αἰὲ θρασύμαχος εἶ, καὶ Πῶλον αἰὲ σὺ πῶλος εἶ, καὶ Δράκοντα τὸν νομοθέτην, ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ἀνθρώπου οἱ νόμοι, ἀλλὰ δράκοντος (Arist. *Rhet.* ii. 23. 28). Even Christ resorted to punning: σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (Matt. 16:18).²

There are some wonderful plays of this character in English. The court jester of Charles the First is said to have made the punning grace, "Great praise be to God and little Laud to the Devil," for which he was dismissed by the archbishop. Another famous pun is that upon *The Beggar's Opera*, which "made Gay rich and Rich gay."³

PARONOMASIA

Quod mutatis verbis salem amittit, in verbis habet leporem omnem.—

Cic. *De orat.* ii. 62. 252.

The Romans loved the clashing of word on word as well as of sword on sword. They were fond of plays which depended for their effect upon similarity or identity of sound at the beginning, middle, or end of words, whether they were etymologically related or not.

¹ Cf. Eur. *Cycl.*, 549, 672 ff.; Aristoph. *Vesp.* 184 ff.

² Cf. pun on Σπάρτη and σπάρτη (Aristoph. *Aves* 813-16); Τρυφέρα τρυφερά (*Anthol. Pal.* v. 153. 2); πάντα Λέοντι and Πανταλέοντι (Quint. 7. 9. 6).

Aristophanes is, of course, fond of word plays; e.g., Διοπέλης (*Vesp.* 380); Νικόβουλος (*Eq.* 615); Λυσιμάχης (*Pax* 992; *Lysist.* 554); Τραγασαῖα (*Achar.* 808). Proper names are suggested by the following words: ἄμυνίαις (*Eq.* 570. This is a sarcastic reference to the Ἄμυνίαις of *Nub.* 692); λυσανίας (*Nub.* 1162). Somewhat similar is παυσανίας in Sophocles (*Frag.* 887, Jebb).

³ Cf. also, "Old Gaunt indeed and gaunt in being old" (*Richard II*, Act II, scene 1, line 73). A well-known clever pun is the following:

"Said a great and sensational preacher
To a hen, 'You're a beautiful creature.'
And the hen, just for that,
Laid an egg in his hat,
And thus did the hen reward Beecher."

Aquilius was the proper person to consult about *aqua* (Cic. *Balb.* 20. 45). Everyone experienced *damnum* in Epidamno (Plaut. *Men.* 267). An effective military figure is seen in *Ballionem exbal-listo* (Plaut. *Pseud.* 585). Cicero uses the word *plebicola* in ironical allusion to Publicola (Cic. *Sest.* 52. 110). *Tiberium in Tiberim* was lèse majesté against the dead emperor (Suet. *Tib.* 75). Victoria outlived her "man," *virum vicit* (*Anthol.* 1142). Friends are invoked to honor Florus with *flores* (*Anthol.* 1594). Narcissus of the flowery name perished in the flower of his youth, *flore iuventae* (Burmman, 4. 102). Pulcher, the cognomen of P. Clodius, provided a tempting target for shafts of witticism: "sed credo postquam speculum tibi adlatum est longe te a pulchris abesse sensisti" (Cic. *In Clod. Frag.* 25). To him the sarcastic *pulchellus* is often applied (Cic. *Att.* i. 16. 10; ii. 1. 4, 18. 3, 22. 1).¹

That a name capable of being punned upon should be an asset seems impossible of belief, yet such a circumstance won Regilianus a kingdom:

Mirabile fortasse videatur, si quae origo imperii eius fuerit declaretur. Capitali enim ioco regna promeruit. Nam cum milites cum eo quidam cenarent, exstitit vicarius tribuni, qui diceret: "Regiliani nomen unde credimus dictum?" Alius continuo: "Credimus quod a regno." Tum is qui aderat scholasticus coepit quasi grammaticaliter declinare et dicere: "Rex regis regi

¹ Cf. also *alienissimus* in allusion to Alienus (Cic. *Div. in Caec.* 15. 50); Archimedes-dempturum (Plaut. *Bacch.* 284-85); Avidius-avidus (*Hist. Aug., Avid. Cass.* 1. 7); Calvinus plays on *calvus* by implication (Suet. *Vesp.* 23. 4; see Rolfe, *Suet.* ii, A 318, note b, Loeb Classical Library); Charinus-χαρίων (Plaut. *Pseud.* 712); Charinus-careo (Plaut. *Pseud.* 736); Crucisalum-Chrysalo (Plaut. *Bacch.* 362); Dolon-dolo (Ovid *Her.* i. 39-40); Felicis-infelicissimi (*CIL*, IX, 1724); Felicitati-infelicissima (*CIL*, IX, 1740); Fortuna-infelices (*CIL*, IV, 29201); Laco, probably play on *lacus* and *λάκκος*, "tank" (Cic. *Phil.* ii. 41. 106); Lucilla-lucrum (*CIL*, IV, 1948); Lucina-lux (*Anthol.* 436); Lucina-lumen (Eng., 153); Lucius-luce-luci (*Anthol.* 516); Lyde-ludo (Plaut. *Bacch.* 129); Molo-molis (Cic. *Att.* ii. 1. 9); parva-Parca (Hor. *C.* ii. 16. 37-39); Phronesium-phronesis (Plaut. *Truc.* 78a); Poeni-poena (Cic. *Verr.* iii. 6. 12); Poeni-poenas (Plaut. *Cist.* 202); Pollex-index (Cic. *Att.* xiii. 46. 1); Primula-prima (*Anthol.* 1614); *quadrare*, in allusion to Quadrantaria (Cic. *Cael.* 29. 69); Saturio-essurio (Plaut. *Pers.* 101-3); Sceledrus-scelus (Plaut. *Mil.* 289; cf. 330, 494); Sosia-socium (Plaut. *Amph.* 383-84); Treviri-tresviri (Cic. *Fam.* vii. 13. 2); Vatinius-vaticinando (Cic. *Vat.* 2. 6); Venus-venerieis (*sic*) rebus (*Anthol.* 181); Venus-venusta (Plaut. *Most.* 161); Verres-vertit (Cic. *Div. in Caec.* 17. 57); Verres-everti and eversus (*Verr.* ii. 22. 54); Verres-aversor (*Verr.* v. 58. 152); Verres-Verria (*Verr.* ii. 21. 52 *ad fin.*); Verres-everriculum (*Verr.* iv. 24. 53); verreret Verres (Cic. *Fragm.* ap. Quint. vi. 3. 55); Dum sum Vitalis et vivo (*CIL*, VIII, 1027; cf. *vita vitalis*, Cic. *Lael.* 6. 22).

Regilianus." Milites, ut est hominum genus pronum ad ea, quae cogitant: "Ergo potest rex esse?" Item alius: "Ergo potest nos regere?" Item alius: "Deus tibi regis nomen posuit." Quid multa? His dictis, cum alia die mane processisset, a principiis imperator est salutatus [Treb. Pol. *Trig. Tyr.* 10. 3.]

The Greek ear was as fond of *jeux de mots* as was the Roman. We find them in the most formal literature, although their presence in serious works is due largely to the feeling that there is a close connection between one's name and one's fate. Bacchylides (6. 1-3) thus commemorates a victor in a foot race: Λάχων . . . λάχε φέρτατον πόδεσσι κύδος. Aeschylus juggles with πανδίκως and Δίκη (*Sept.* 657-58). Πανσανίου παυσαμένου (Plato *Symp.* 185 C), "Pausanias pausing," is one of the few puns that can be readily translated into English. Demosthenes too yields to temptation as we see in σοφῶ Σοφοκλεῖ (19. 248). This reminds one of the parasites described by Pliny (*Ep.* ii. 14. 5), who were accustomed to go from court to court and to shout applause, σαφῶς καλεῖν, thus earning the name Σοφοκλεῖς.¹

Simonides (168) catered to the taste for a nonsensical jingle:

Σῶσος καὶ Σωσώ, σῶτερ, σοὶ τόνδ' ἀνέθηκαν
Σῶσος μὲν σωθεῖς, Σωσώ δ' ὅτι Σῶσος ἐσώθη.

The Greeks were fascinated by the mysteries of the winged word. One manifestation of this is the etymological pun. A few instances may be cited from Euripides, who was known as the τραγικός ἐτυμολόγος: "Δολων from δόλος (*Rhes.* 158), 'Ατρεὺς from ἄτρεστος (*Iph. in Aulide* 321), Πενθεὺς from πένθος (*Bacch.* 367), 'Αφροδίτη from ἀφροσύνη (*Tro.* 989), 'Ελένη from ελεῖν (*Tro.* 891), "Ἴων from ἰέναι (*Ion.* 661, 802, etc.), Καπανεὺς from καπνός (*Suppl.* 496), Ζῆθος from ζητεῖν (*Frag.* 179), 'Αμφίων from ἀμφιέναι (*Frag.* 180), Δανάη from δηναῖος (*Frag.* 317, vs. 20), Βοιωτὸς from βοῦς (*Frag.* 485), Μελέαγρος from μελέα ἄγρα (*Frag.* 525)."²

A pun may be hinted at rather than expressed; for example, "Αἰδης . . . πλουτίζεται (*Soph. O.T.* 30). Here Πλούτων suggests

¹ Other plays: ὑπὸ τοῦ γέλωτος εἰς Γέλαν ἀφίξομαι (Aristoph. *Frag.* 1, p. 546 K); Γέλας-Καταγέλας (Aristoph. *Achar.* 606; Athen. 314 F); εὐροον Εὐρώταν (Eur. *Hec.* 649); Λοξίας (playing on λοξός and εἰθύτατος: Pind. *Pyth.* 3. 28); Παλίκων (playing on πάλιν Aesch. *Frag.* 5, Nauck). Likewise, μῆδεσιν suggests Medea (Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 27) and σκύλαξ hints at Scylla (Aesch. *Cho.* 612).

² Paley, *Introd. to Eur.* I, p. xxx. Cf. also Θάας from θαός (Eur. *Iph. in Tauris* 32); 'Ελένη and εἰλε (*Hec.* 442).

itself as an equivalent of 'Αιδης. Mockery and parody are combined in Aristophanes' *Pax* (1293), where Λάμαχος is described as ἀνδρὸς βουλομάχου καὶ κλαυσιμάχου τινὸς υἱός. Definitional plays occur at times. In the *Iliad* (ii. 702) Homer clearly has the etymology of Protesilaus in mind when he represents him as νηὸς ἀποθρώσκοντα πολὺν πρῶτιστον Ἀχαιῶν.¹ The same thing is true of Δημόδοκος, λαοῖσι τετιμένος (*Odyss.* xiii. 28).²

Shakespeare's audience was fond of puns, however poor or obvious; for example, Brutus and brute (*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene ii, lines 97-99); luces and louses (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act. I, scene 1); Rome and room (*Richard II*, Act II, scene 1, line 73); Rome and roam (*I Henry VI*, Act III, scene 1, line 51).³

NAMES APPROPRIATE

O how that name befits thy composition.—*Richard II*.

There is a much-used type of word play in which the appropriateness of the name is indicated, or a wish or prayer is expressed that the literal meaning of the name may be fulfilled. Among the common people of ancient Italy it was in great favor for metrical inscriptions:

Candida praesenti tegitur matrona sepulcro

Moribus ingenio et gravitate *nitens*.—*Anthol.* 1390.

Meritibus pariterque et nomine *Celsa*.—*Anthol.* 700.

Corpore mente animo pariterque et nomine *Felix*.—*Anthol. Suppl.* 1. 61.

Sed te nunc, *Pietas*, venerorque precorque

ut bene pro meritis hilares *Hilaram*.—*Anthol.* 963.

Hoc lapide tegitur *Aurelia Pia* piissima coniunx.—*Chol.*, 21.

Nomine *Pulcheria* fuit, sed nomine formam

signavit mentemq. simul vitamq. decentem.—*Anthol.* 710.

Turtura nomen abis, set *turtur* vera fuisti

cui coniux moriens non fuit alter amor.—*Eng.*, 358.⁴

¹ Protesilaus means literally, "qui praecurrit populum"; see Fay, *Classical Quarterly*, VIII, 59.

² Demodocus = δῆμος + Gk. cognate of *decus*.

³ The writer is aware, of course, that the pronunciation of some of these words has changed.

⁴ Other plays of this character are *Calliste* (*Anthol.* 1035); *Clearchus* (*Anthol.* 235); *Clemens* (*Burmman*, 4. 105); *Dextrianus* (*Anthol.* 769); *Felix* (*Anthol.* 661, 671, 1271; *Eng.*, 51; *CIL*, IV, 6815); *Floridus* (*Anthol.* 686); *Hedistes* (*Anthol.* 1046); *Kara* (*Chol.*, 734); *Petrus* (*Anthol.* 312); *Proba* (*Burmman*, 4. 136); *Vitalis* (*Anthol.* 1801).

The last epitaph is a gem, since the turtledove is a conspicuous example of conjugal fidelity in the animal kingdom.

The name of Iuba was appropriate, since he was *bene capillatus* (Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2. 59). Likewise it was fitting for Iuventus to be supported by an *adulescens* (Cic. *Planc.* 24. 58). *Parca non mendax* (Hor. *C.* ii. 16. 39) is sometimes interpreted as "Parca not belying her name," but it is best taken as an equivalent of *Parca tenax veri* (Pers. *Sat.* 5. 48).

In Greek the most conspicuous illustration of the suitability of a name is Helen: *τίς ποτ' ὠνόμαζεν ᾧδ' ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐτητύμωσ· μή τις ὄντιν' οὐχ ὀρώμεν προνοίαισι τοῦ πεπρωμένον γλῶσσαν ἐν τύχῃ νέμων; τὰν δορίγαμβρον ἀμφινεκῇ θ' Ἑλέναν; ἐπεὶ πρεπόντως ἑλένας, ἑλανδρος, ἐλέπτολις* (Aesch. *Agamem.* 681-89).

Eteocles and Polynices met fates conforming to their names: *οἱ δῆτ' ὀρθῶς κατ' ἐπωνυμίαν* (i.e., *ἐτεῶς κληζόμενος*) *καὶ πολυνεικεῖς ὦλοντ' ἀσεβείῃ διανοίᾳ* (Aesch. *Sepi.* 814-16; cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 636).¹

St. Paul plays on the name of Onesimus (ὄνησις, "profit"), who, after being ἀχρηστος, thus belying his name, finally lived up to it and became useful, εὐχρηστος (Phil., chap. 11). Another example is found in Genesis (27:36): "Is he not rightly named Jacob [supplanter]? For he has supplanted me these two times."

NAMES INAPPROPRIATE

Sed scitis esse notissimum ridiculi genus, cum aliud exspectamus, aliud dicitur.—Cic. *De orat.* ii. 62. 254.

It frequently happens that the character or fate of a person is the very antithesis of that indicated by the name. A mordant pun of this type was made at the expense of a Latin historian by Tertullian (*Apol.* 16): "Cornelius Tacitus, sane ille mendaciorum loquacissimus." Upon a wall at Pompeii some wag wrote: "Verus hic ubi stat, nihil veri" (*CIL*, IV, 1662). Cicero connects the name Caesar with *caedere*: "C. Caesarem, *mitem* hominem et a *caede* *abhorrentem*" (*Sest.* 63. 132).

A rich field for such plays is found in sepulchral inscriptions, in which is recorded the contrast between the hopes and the fate of the deceased:

¹ See also Ἀρήτη (*Odys.* vii. 54); Ὀδυσσεύς (*Odys.* xix. 409); Ἐπαφος (Aesch. *Suppl.* 45. 286, Tucker; Aesch. *Prom.* 850-51); Βόσπορος (Aesch. *Prom.* 733-34); Σιδηρώ (Soph. *Frag.* 658, Jebb).

Hunc Antho [=flos] tumulum male deflorentibus annis
 pro pietate pari composuere suo.—*Anthol.* 1059.
 Crescens hic ego sum: fueram spes magna parentum,
 quod non adcrevi, nomen inane fuit.—*Anthol.* 1196.
 Cunctis fila parant Parcae nec parcitur ullis.—*Anthol.* 627.¹
 Hic situs est infans Victor desertus ab annis,
 Invidere viro tunc nomina ferre decenter.—*Anthol.* 458.²

The punnigram of Felix and Felicitas doubtless greatly consoled them in their bereavement: *Ael. Feliciori Fabacio Felix et Felicitas parentes infelices* (*CIL*, X, 2004).

In the Seven against Thebes (523-24) Parthenopaeus is represented as belying his name:

ὃ δ' ὤμῳ, οὔτι παρθένων ἐπώνυμον
 φρόνημα, γοργὸν δ' ὅμῳ ἔχων, προσίσταται.

Other instances may be cited: ψευδωνύμως σε δαίμονες Προμηθεά
 καλοῦσιν· αὐτὸν γάρ σε δεῖ προμηθέως, ὅτῳ τρόπῳ τῆσδ' ἐκκυλισθήσῃ
 τέχνης (*Aesch. Prom.* 85-87); 'Ανάσχετος οὐκ ἀνάσχετος (*Arist. Rhet.*
 iii. 11. 8).

GREEK NAMES TRANSLATED

At times we find names of Greek origin practically translated:³

Hic tumulatus iacit homo, qui dum vixit habebat
 magnam Callinomi <καλόν+θνομα>vocitatus nomine famam.—*Chol.*,
 278.

¹ Cf. also Parca tenax (*Chol.*, 468); male Parcarum . . . sororum (*Anthol.* 428); non Parca parcit (*Anthol.* 221); non . . . pepercit Parca (*Chol.*, 169); ante diem ruperunt stemina [=non pepercerunt] Parcae (*Eng.*, 153); Parca aetatis nostrae praecepit colu, i.e., non pepercit (*Anthol.* 1144).

² Cf. also Felicia-infelix (*CIL*, IX, 2140); Felicianus-infelicissimus (*CIL*, X, 365); Felicitas-infelix (*Anthol.* 682); Felicitati infelicissimae (*CIL*, IV, 14799); Felicia-misera (*Anthol.* 1064); Felicula infelix (*CIL*, IX, 1468); Felix-miselle (*Anthol.* 1328); Felix de nomine tantum (*Eng.*, 153); Fortuna infelices (*CIL*, VI, 29201); Fortunata infelicissima (*CIL*, VI, 15352; VI, 29654); Fortunatus-infelix (*CIL*, X, 5555); Gelasimus-Catagelasimus (*Plaut. Stich.* 630); Hilaritas-dolor luctusque (*Eng.*, 213); Phrygi (frugi)-edacem (*Cic. Flacc.* 41); Scatonem (scatere) illum, hominem sua virtute egentem (*Cic. Dom.* 116).

³ In a passage in *Paradise Lost* (II, 577-83), Milton virtually translates Greek names:

"Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate;
 Sad Acheron of sorrow black and deep;
 Cocytus, named of lamentation loud
 Heard on the rueful stream; fierce Phlegeton,
 Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.
 Far off from these, a slow and silent stream,
 Lethe, the river of oblivion rolls . . . "

Nobilis Eugenia <εὐ+γένος> praeclari sanguinis ortu,
 quae meritis vivit, hic tumulata iacit.—*Anthol.* 1447.
 Hoc iacet in tumulo secura Glyconis <γλύκων> honesto.
 Dulcis nomine erat, anima quoque dulcior usque.—*Anthol.* 495.
 Stephane <στέφανος>, vitae nostrae dum vivis decus,
 vere choronam te accepi et mox peridi.—*Anthol.* 92.
 Verum Thrasyllus <θρασύς> praeceps alioquin et de ipso nomine temerarius.
 —Apul. *Met.* 8. 8.

As there is no Latin word for rhodanthion, the writer had to content himself with the statement that "Rhodanthion nomine floris erat" (*Anthol.* 1142).

LITERAL MEANING OF NAME DEVELOPED

Ingeniosi enim videtur vim verbi in aliud atque ceteri accipiant posse ducere.—Cic. *De orat.* ii. 62. 254.

At times, when the literal meaning of a word is suggested to a writer or speaker, he decides to "carry on," and to develop the idea thus connoted. This happens very frequently in the case of animal names, of which there are so many in Latin. A clever witticism was suggested by the sight of a group of companions with bird names: "Sedebat ad sinistram ei Cornelius Merula <blackbird>, consulari familia ortus, et Tircellius Pavo <peacock> Reatinus, ad dextram Minucius Pica <magpie> et M. Petronius Passer <sparrow>. Ad quem cum accessisemus, Axius Appio subridens, 'Recipis nos,' inquit, 'in tuum ornithona, ubi sedes inter aves?'" (Varro *Res. rust.* iii. 2. 2).

At the death of Diodotus the rhetorician, Metellus Pius made an allusion to Corax, the founder of the school of rhetoric, by setting up a stone crow. Cicero, having in mind perhaps some flapping gesticulations of Metellus, said that it was a fitting thing to do, since Corax had taught him to fly, not to speak (Plut. *Mor.* 205A). In another place Cicero writes: "Quare coracem istum vestrum patiamur nos quidem pullos suos excludere in nido, qui evolent clamatores odiosi ac molesti" (*De orat.* iii. 21. 81). A disgusted jury dismissed the suit of Tisias against Corax with the contemptuous proverb, *κακοῦ κόρακος κακὸν ῥόν.*¹ Perhaps the Mr. Crow's of antiquity suffered as much from the ubiquitous punster as anybody.

¹ Spengel, *Artium scriptores*, p. 26.

The name Caninius suggested to Cicero the notion of a watchdog: "Nihil tamen eo consule mali factum est; fuit enim mirifica vigilantia, qui suo toto consulatu somnum non viderit" (*Fam.* vii. 30. 1). When the last letters of the name Verrutium were lost in a smudge, the orator compared them to the tail of a pig sunk in mud: "Videtis *Verrutium*? Videtis primas literas integras? Videtis extremam partem nominis, caudam illam verrinam tamquam in luto esse in litura?" (*Verr.* ii. 78. 191). Porcius naturally connotes greediness: "Porcius infra, ridiculus totas simul absorbere placentas" (*Hor. Sat.* ii. 8. 23-24).

Nero's musical attainments were duly advertised: "Ascriptum et columnis, etiam Gallos <Gauls and cocks> eum cantando <singing and crowing> excitasse (Suet. *Nero* 45. 2). A complex pun is seen in Cicero's designation of Minotaur for certain colleagues in the praetorship, Calvisius and Taurus (*Fam.* xii. 25. 1). The reason for the last half of the epithet is obvious. The first half was pertinent, since, as Cicero elsewhere tells us (*Fam.* x. 26. 3), Calvisius was *homo magni iudicii*, therein resembling Minos. When a certain Caecilius, who was suspected of Judaism, wished to undertake the prosecution of Verres, Cicero asked, τί 'Ιουδαίω πρὸς χοῖρον; (Plut. *Cic.* 7).¹

The word 'Ρωσικόν led Athenaeus to say that Rhosian ware was εὐανθέστατον (6. 229C). Simonides (13) carries out a figure suggested by an animal name: ἐπέξαθ' ὁ Κριὸς οὐκ ἀεικέως ἐλθὼν ἐς εὐδενδρον ἀγλαὸν Διὸς τέμενος. Compare Λύκει' ἄναξ, λύκειος γενοῦ (Aesch. *Sept.* 131).

¹ Cf. also Aper (*Anthol.* 441); odor Aproni taeterrimus (*Cic. Verr.* iii. 9. 23); Aproniani convivi (*Verr.* iii. 11. 28); Apronianum lucellum (*Verr.* iii. 30. 72); Apronium-Verrem alterum (*Verr.* iii. 36. 84); Apronius in agris (*Verr.* iii. 46. 109); Argentea and Silver Age (Burmah, 4. 140); nobilem sui generis, Asinium Dentonem (*Cic. Att.* v. 20. 4; see Tyrrell and Purser, *The Correspondence of Cicero*, III, 116); Bivium-de via decessisse (*Cic. Cluent.* 59. 163); Catule, quid latras? (given in indirect form, *Cic. De orat.* ii. 54. 220); florentem Crhysanti famam (*Anthol.* 327); Ligarii (=ligare)-retinendi (*Cic. Lig.* 11. 33); Nummum divisorem (*Cic. De orat.* ii. 63. 257); Plancus (cf. plangere)-in plorando (*Cic. Planc.* 14. 34); Rosa florivit (*Anthol.* 216); Sacerdos failed to act the priest and kill a worthless verres (*Verr.* i. 46. 121); Servius vixit ad aliorum arbitrium, non ad suum (*Cic. Mur.* 9. 19); Tertia-prima (Chol., 146); Tranjo (=picus)-exi nido (Plaut. *Most.* 5); Verres and Erymanthian boar (*Verr.* iv. 43. 95); Verres-in luto volutatum (*Verr.* iv. 24. 53); Verres-Apronius-sui similes-sui simillimum (*Verr.* iii. 9. 22); Vetustilla (Mart. 3. 93).

One illustration may be quoted from English:

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame,
Which like a canker in the fragrant Rose
Dost spot the beautie of thy budding name.¹

HYBRID PUNS

A little Latin and less Greek.

There are several bilingual puns recorded in Latin literature, for example, "Legati sunt Q. Metellus Creticus et L. Flaccus et τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον, Lentulus Clodiani filius" (Cic. *Att.* i. 19. 2). The Greek is evidently a proverb with the idea of "pearls before swine." The name Lentulus is played upon by φακῇ, "lens." Tyrrell explains the joke as follows: "There is no use in pouring unguents on lentils, and this important commission is thrown away on such an one as Lentulus."

One of Crassus' sons, who so closely resembled a certain Axius as to throw some suspicion on his mother's honor, made a successful speech in the senate. On being asked how he liked it, Cicero replied in Greek, "Ἀξίος Κράσσου (Plut. *Cic.* 25 *ad fin.*).

When Tibullus wished to camouflage the name of his first love, Plania, he coined the word Delia from δηλος. At the celebrated banquet of Trimalchio a clever slave "took off" now Lyaeus, now Euhius. Turning to him, the master said: "Dionyse, liber esto" (Petr. 41).²

DISTORTION OF NAMES

And if his name be George, I'll call him Peter.—*King John*.

The humor of miscalling and distortion, of which Americans are so fond, appealed to the ancients also. Roman soldiers made a threefold assault upon the character of Tiberius Claudius Nero by calling him Biberius Caldius Mero³ (Suet. *Tib.* 42; cf. Aur. Vict.

¹ Shakespeare, Sonnet 95, lines 1-3.

² Cf. also Acontius-ἀκόντιον, ἀκοντίζω (Ovid *Her.* 21. 209); illud nomen aureum Chrysogoni (Cic. *S. Rosc.* 43. 124); Dicaearchus-δικαίαρχοι (Cic. *Att.* ii. 12. 4); Dicaea-ἄδικος (Plaut. *Pers.* 438); Hippias (Cic. *Phil.* ii. 25. 62); Lysidicus (λύσις+δίκη)-omnia iura dissolvit (Cic. *Phil.* xi. 6. 14); Philomela ac Progne-hirundines (Plaut. *Rud.* 604); Toxilus-venefice (Plaut. *Pers.* 277-78); Tranio (τερπαλνεί "pierces"; see Fay, *Mostellaria*, p. 64, and notes to 5, 65, 825, 827, 903).

³ In reply to taunts hurled across No Man's Land, the Canadians used to ask about the health of the "Clown Prince," of old "Von Woodenburg," of old "One O'clock," or "One Bumstöff."

Epit. 2. 2). Cato, vexed at the fickleness or inconstancy of Nobilior, called him Mobilior (Cic. *De orat.* ii. 63. 256). On one occasion Mestrius Florus told Vespasian that *plaustra* rather than *plostra* was the correct pronunciation. The next day the Emperor squared accounts by saluting him as Flaurus (Suet. *Vesp.* 22). Before Vespasian's elevation to power one of Nero's ushers told him to go to Morbovia (Suet. *Vesp.* 14). The name Morbovia was coined on the analogy of such names as Gergovia, Segovia, etc.¹

THE TAUTOLOGICAL PLAY

Eandem rem dicit, commutatis verbis (with apologies to Cic. *Arch.* 8. 18).

In the tautological play an adjective contains a notion already present in the proper name but obscured by the foreign pedigree of the noun. This is perhaps the most subtle as well as the most artistic use of word play. Vergil resorts to it on several occasions: for example, *pluviasque Hyadas* (i. 744; cf. *ῥεῖν*, "to rain"), *Plemmyrium undosum* (3. 693; cf. *ῥέπειν*, "to flow"); *stagnantis Heloi* (3. 698; cf. *ἑλος*, "the marshy place"), *arduus Acragas* (3. 703; cf. *ἄκρος*, "height").

We are told that the word Carthage signifies *Civitas Nova* (Sol. 27. 10). Vergil was undoubtedly playing on the etymology of the name in the expression *novae Carthaginiis* (i. 298, 366).

A good example with a common noun occurs in Shakespeare (*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I, scene 1, lines 243-45): "So it is, besieged with sable-coloured melancholy, I did commend the black oppressing humour . . ." He knew, of course, that *melan* meant "black."

OMENS AND EUPHEMISMS

What's in a name?

Omens derived from proper names and euphemistic proper names are really forms of word play. Some of Cicero's comments on the omens of names deserve quotation:

Itemque in lustranda colonia ab eo, qui eam deduceret, et cum imperator exercitum, censor populum lustraret, bonis nominibus, qui hostias ducerent,

¹ Cf. also Labienus-Rabies (Sen. *Contr.* 10. 5); Theomnastus-Theoractus (Cic. *Verr.* iv. 66. 148).

eligeantur. Quod idem in dilectu consules observant ut primus miles fiat bono nomine. Quae quidem a te scis et consule et imperatore summa cum religione esse servata. Praerogativam etiam maiores omen iustorum comitiorum esse voluerunt [*Div.* i. 45. 102-3].

The same thing was done in court. Cicero thus addresses a certain Valerius (cf. *valere*) who was put on the stand by the opposition: "Quodsi te omen nominis vestri forte duxit, nos tamen id more maiorum, quia faustum putamus, non ad perniciem, verum ad salutem interpretamur" (*Scaur.* 30).

Doubly ill-omened was the name of Atrius Umber, "nominis etiam abominandi dux" (*Liv.* xxviii. 28. 4), whom the soldiers refused to follow. De Quincey calls it a "pleonasm of darkness." An illustration of a good omen is seen in Livy's description of an expedition to Africa: "Scipio, quod esset proximum promunturium, percunctatus cum Pulchri promunturium id vocari audisset, 'Placet omen,' inquit, 'huc dirigite naves.' Eo classis decurrit, copiaeque omnes in terram expositae sunt" (*Lib.* xxix. 27. 12-13).

A lucky omen is recorded of Augustus: "Apud Actium descendentem in aciem asellus cum asinario occurrit: homini Eutyclus <Fortunatus>, bestiae Nicon <Vincens> erat nomen; utriusque simulacrum aeneum victor posuit in templo, in quod castrorum suorum locum vertit" (*Suet. Aug.* 96. 2).

Failure to heed an omen often brought fatal results: "Adnotatu dignum illud quoque omen, sub quo Petilius consul in Liguria bellum gerens occiderit: nam cum montem, cui Leto cognomen erat, oppugnaret interque adhortationem militum dixisset, 'Hodie ego Letum utique capiam,' inconsideratius proeliando fortuitum iactum vocis leto suo confirmavit" (*Val. Max.* i. 5. 9).¹

The Greeks too believed that there was some mysterious connection between the name and the fate of a person. At one period

¹ Compare the following omens: Basilides (*Suet. Vesp.* 7); Beneventum (*Plin. H.N.* 3. 105; *Procop.* i. 15. 4); Cauneas (*Cic. Div.* ii. 40. 84); Chelidon (*Cic. Verr.* i. 40. 104); Epidamnus (*Plaut. Men.* 263-64; *Plin. N.H.* 3. 145; see also Keller, *Lateinische Volksetymologie*, pp. 232-36); Felicula (*CIL*, IV, 4477); Gaia Caecilia (*Fest.*, p. 95); Κατωβασιλεια (*Val. Max.* i. 5. 6); Persa periit (*Cic. Div.* i. 46. 103; cf. *Val. Max.* i. 5. 3); Saxa (*Cic. Phil.* xi. 5. 12); Segesta (*Fest.*, p. 340M); Stephanus (*Anthol.* 92); Verres (*Cic. Verr.* ii. 6. 18; ii. 7. 19). See also Keller, *op. cit.*, 17, 235; Tyrrell, *Miles Gloriosus*, note on *Lucr.* 842.

they thought that words represented the true inwardness or essence of things. It is not strange, therefore, that the meaning attaching to names played an important part in their life. The best illustration of the Greek feeling is seen in Aeschylus' comments on the name Helen, which have been quoted elsewhere.

An instance almost equally illuminating occurs in the *Ajax* of Sophocles (430-33), in which Ajax laments the suitability of his name to his fate:

αἰαί· τίς ἄν ποτ' ὤελ' ὦδ' ἐπώνυμον
τοῦμόν ξυνοίσειν ὄνομα τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς;
νῦν γὰρ πάρεστι καὶ δις αἰάζειν ἐμοὶ
καὶ τρίς. τοιούτοις γὰρ κακοῖς ἐντυγχάνω.

The epigram of Ausonius (20) on bibulous old Meroe is more Greek in feeling than Roman:

Qui primus, Meroe, nomen tibi condidit, ille
Thesidae nomen condidit Hippolyto¹
nam divinare est, nomen componere quod sit
fortune et morum vel necis indicium
Protesilae,¹ tibi nomen sic fata dederunt,
victima quod Troiae prima futurus eras,
Idmona² quod vatem, medicum quod Iapyga¹ dicunt.
discendas artes nomina praeveniunt
et tu sic Meroe: non quod sis atra colore
ut quae Miliaca nascitur in Meroe.
infusum sed quod vinum non diluis undis
potare inmixtum sueta merumque merum.

Even at the dawn of Greek literature names were exercising a controlling influence over one's fate, as we see in the case of Ulysses: πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγὼ γε ὀδυσσάμενος τόδ' ἰκάνω . . . τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὄνομα ἔστω ἐπώνυμον (*Odys.* xix. 407-9; cf. i. 62; v. 340; xix. 275-76). Aeneas had no chance to become master of his destiny: τῷ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομα ἔσσεται, οὐνεκα μ' αἰνὸν ἔσχεν ἄχος (*Hymn to Aphr.* 198). The omen of a name may result in a blessing as well as an evil. In a fragment of Pindar Hieron is addressed as follows: ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὁμώνυμε πάτερ.²

¹ Hippolytus <ἵππος+λύεσθαι>; Protesilaus <πρῶτος+λαοῦ>; Idmon <εἶδω, "to know">; Iapyx <ἰᾶσθαι, "to heal."

² Cf. also Ἀφροδίτη and Πενθεύς (*Arist. Rhet.* ii. 23. 28); χαῖρε (*Strabo* 5. p. 220 Casaubon).

The Greek etymological puns quoted elsewhere might be classified here, since they are really omens conveyed by words. It is this character as omens that makes these plays seem not unworthy of grave poetry. The Greeks would not have agreed with Faust that "Name ist Schall und Rauch," or with Juliet that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. "Naming thy name [Rose] blesses an ill report,"¹ would have been more in accordance with the Greek feeling.

Euphemistic changes, such as Maleventum to Beneventum, Fata to Parcae, Nequinum to Narnia, "Ἀξεινος to Εὖξεινος, Ἐρινύες to Εὐμενίδες, are by no means rare. It may be noted too that the Portuguese changed the name of the Cape of Storms to Cape of Good Hope, and that the name Servia now appears as Serbia.

In this paper some three hundred and thirty puns and plays have been quoted or listed. Of these about seventy-five were made by Cicero. As a young man fighting Verres he became addicted to punning, and he was still punning away in the *Philippics*. Were the orations his only surviving works, one might suspect that he was catering to his audience; his letters, however, to the cultured Atticus bristle with word play, and there can be little doubt that he punned as regularly as the sun rose. As is the case with all inveterate punsters, the merit of his efforts was not sustained; not infrequently his witticisms are mere *tours de force*. The fact that a joke was far-fetched and cheap did not prevent its repetition, as we see in the case of Verres and Apronius.

Plays like some of those that Cicero and his fellow-countrymen made would not elicit a smile from us; in fact, the perpetrators would get scant toleration. Puns upon proper names are especially tactless. A great writer or speaker resorts to them only occasionally, and then with an apologetic air. A lawyer who persistently made poor puns at a trial today would probably be rebuked for contempt of court. Styles and fashions in humor change, even if they do not improve.

¹ Shakespeare, Sonnet 95, line 8.